UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/52/615
2 December 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-second session
Agenda item 85

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Rapporteur: Ms. Riitta RESCH (Finland)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 4th plenary meeting, on 19 September 1997, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fifty-second session the item entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 2nd and 10th to 13th meetings, on 30 September and from 3 to 6 November 1997, and held a general debate on the item at the 10th to 13th meetings (see A/C.4/52/SR.2 and 10-13).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space;[1]

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/52/307);

(c) Letter dated 6 November 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/52/20).

the report of the pro tempore secretariat of the Third Space Conference of the Americas on its activities during 1997 (A/52/655).

4. At its 2nd meeting, on 30 September, the Committee decided to establish an open-ended Working Group on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to be chaired by the delegation of India, to prepare the draft resolution on the item.

5. At the 10th meeting, on 3 November, the Chairman of the Fourth Committee made an introductory statement (see A/C.4/52/SR.10).

6. At the same meeting, the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space introduced the report of that Committee.[1]

II. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTION A/C.4/52/L.8

7. At the 13th meeting, on 6 November, the representative of India, on behalf of the Working Group and Austria, introduced a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" (A/C.4/52/L.8).

8. At the same meeting, the representative of China proposed an amendment to operative paragraph 25 of the draft resolution, by which the words "for Latin America and the Caribbean and for Asia and the Pacific, respectively" would be inserted after the word "development".

9. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted the amendment proposed orally by China without a vote.

10. Also at its 13th meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/52/L.8, as orally amended, without a vote (see para. 11).

III. RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)

11. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 51/123 of 13 December 1996,

Deeply convinced of the common interest of mankind in promoting the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes and in continuing efforts to extend to all States the benefits derived therefrom, and also of the

importance of international cooperation in this field, for which the United Nations should continue to provide a focal point,

Reaffirming the importance of international cooperation in developing the rule of law, including the relevant norms of space law and their important role in international cooperation for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, and of the widest possible adherence to international treaties that promote the peaceful uses of outer space,

Concerned about the possibility of an arms race in outer space,

Recognizing that all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, should contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes,

Considering that space debris is an issue of concern to all nations,

Noting the progress achieved in the further development of peaceful space exploration and applications as well as in various national and cooperative space projects, which contribute to international cooperation, and the importance of further international cooperation in this field,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General[2] on the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space,[3]

Having considered the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its fortieth session,[4]

1. Endorses the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its fortieth session;

---

[2] A/52/307.

[3] See Report of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Vienna, 9-21 August 1982 and corrigenda (A/CONF.101/10 and Corr.1 and 2).

[4] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/52/20).

2. Invites States that have not yet become parties to the international treaties governing the uses of outer space[5] to give consideration to ratifying or acceding to those treaties;

3. Notes that, at its thirty-sixth session, the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in its working group, continued its work as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/123;[6]

4. Endorses the recommendations of the Committee that the Legal Subcommittee, at its thirty-seventh session, taking into account the concerns of all countries, particularly those of developing countries, should:

(a) Continue its consideration of review and possible revision of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space;[7]

(b) Continue, through its working group, its consideration of matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and to the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, including consideration of ways and means to ensure the rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union;

(c) Begin its review of the status of the five international legal instruments governing outer space;

(d) Continue its consideration of other matters, including informal consultations on specific proposals already made concerning possible new agenda items for the Legal Subcommittee;

5. Also endorses the recommendation of the Committee that the Legal Subcommittee, at its thirty-seventh session, should suspend consideration in its working group of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space pending the results of the work in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, without prejudice to the possibility of reconvening its working group on that item if, in the opinion of the Legal Subcommittee, sufficient progress was made in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its session in 1998 to warrant the reconvening of the working group;

---

[5] Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (resolution 2222 (XXI), annex); Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space (resolution 2345 (XXII), annex); Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects (resolution 2777 (XXVI), annex); Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (resolution 3235 (XXIX), annex); Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (resolution 34/68, annex).

[6] See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/52/20), sect. II.C.

[7] See resolution 47/68.

6. Notes that, in the context of paragraph 4 (c) above, the Legal Subcommittee would implement the work plan that it adopted at its thirty-sixth session;[8]

7. Also notes that deliberations on the question of the geostationary orbit were undertaken by the Legal Subcommittee, as reflected in its report,[6] on the basis of recent proposals which might provide a new and enhanced basis for future work;

8. Endorses the recommendations and agreements concerning the organization of work in the Legal Subcommittee;

9. Notes with satisfaction that, in accordance with paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 51/123, the Legal Subcommittee was provided, at its thirty-sixth session, with unedited verbatim transcripts of the proceedings in lieu of summary records, and notes that, in accordance with paragraph 10 of that resolution, the Committee evaluated the use of unedited verbatim transcripts at its fortieth session and agreed to continue the use of those transcripts in lieu of verbatim records and to further review its requirements for those transcripts at its forty-first session;

10. Also notes with satisfaction that, in accordance with paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 51/123, the Chairman of the Committee continued to hold inter-sessional informal consultations among the members of the Committee concerning the working methods of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies and that consensus decisions were reached, before the fortieth session of the Committee, on measures relating to the composition and election of the bureaux of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, agenda structures and the duration of the sessions of those bodies;

11. Endorses the new measures relating to the working methods of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies adopted by the Committee at its fortieth session in respect of the three elements set out in paragraph 10 above,[9] and notes that, in accordance with paragraph 14 of General Assembly resolution 51/123, the Committee has begun the implementation of those measures;

12. Notes that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, at its thirty-fourth session, continued its work as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/123;[10]

13. Notes with satisfaction that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee continued to consider on a priority basis the agenda item on space debris and that the work of the Subcommittee at its thirty-fourth session concentrated on the topics of modelling of the space debris environment and risk assessment, on

---

[8] See A/AC.105/674, annex II.B.

[9] See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/52/20), annex I.

[10] Ibid., sect. II.B.

the basis of the multi-year work plan adopted by the Subcommittee at its thirty-second session;[11]

14. Agrees that the multi-year work plan for the consideration of the item on space debris should continue to be implemented with flexibility;

15. Endorses the recommendations of the Committee that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-fifth session, taking into account the concerns of all countries, particularly those of developing countries, should:

(a) Consider the following items on a priority basis:

(i) United Nations Programme on Space Applications and the coordination of space activities within the United Nations system;

(ii) Preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) as the Advisory Committee for UNISPACE III;

(iii) Matters relating to remote sensing of the Earth by satellites, including, inter alia, applications for developing countries;

(iv) Use of nuclear power sources in outer space;

(v) Space debris;

(b) Consider the following items:

(i) Questions relating to space transportation systems and their implications for future activities in space;

(ii) Examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit and of its utilization and applications, including, inter alia, in the field of space communications, as well as other questions relating to space communications developments, taking particular account of the needs and interests of developing countries;

(iii) Matters relating to life sciences, including space medicine;

(iv) Progress in national and international space activities related to the Earth's environment, in particular progress in the international geosphere-biosphere (global change) programme;

(v) Matters relating to planetary exploration;

(vi) Matters relating to astronomy;

---

[11] A/AC.105/605, para. 83.

(vii) The theme fixed for special attention at the thirty-fifth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee: "Scientific and technical aspects and applications of space-based meteorology"; the Committee on Space Research and the International Astronautical Federation, in liaison with Member States, should be invited to arrange a symposium, with as wide a participation as possible, to be held during the first week of the Subcommittee's session, to complement discussions within the Subcommittee on the special theme;

16. Endorses the recommendations of the Working Group of the Whole to Evaluate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, as endorsed by the Committee and as contained in the report of the Working Group of the Whole;[12]

17. Agrees that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee should reconvene, at its thirty-fifth session, the Working Group of the Whole to conclude its evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations of the Second Conference and to assist the Advisory Committee for the Third Conference in its preparatory work for that Conference;

18. Invites Member States to report to the Secretary-General on a regular basis with regard to national and international research concerning the safety of space objects with nuclear power sources on board;

19. Endorses the United Nations Programme on Space Applications for 1998, as proposed to the Committee by the Expert on Space Applications;[13]

20. Invites all Governments within the organizations of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations working in the field of outer space or on space-related matters to take effective action for the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and also invites the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session on the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference;

21. Notes with satisfaction that, in accordance with paragraph 30 of General Assembly resolution 50/27 of 6 December 1995, the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific continued its education programme in 1997 and that significant progress has been achieved in establishing regional centres for space science and technology education in the other regions;

22. Notes that, pursuant to the request in paragraph 29 of General Assembly resolution 51/123, the Committee and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at their 1997 sessions, carried out the tasks entrusted to them in their roles as the Preparatory Committee and the Advisory Committee,

---

[12] A/AC.105/672, annex II.

[13] See A/AC.105/660, sect. I.

respectively, for a special session of the Committee, open to all States Members of the United Nations;

23. Agrees that the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) shall be convened at the United Nations Office at Vienna from 19 to 30 July 1999 as a special session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, open to all States Members of the United Nations;

24. Endorses the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee at its 1997 session, as contained in its report,[14] and requests the Preparatory and Advisory Committees and the executive secretariat to carry out their tasks in accordance with those recommendations and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session;

25. Notes with satisfaction that, in preparation for UNISPACE III, Chile and Malaysia offered to host United Nations regional meetings on space technology and applications for development for Latin America and the Caribbean and for Asia and the Pacific, respectively, and Tunisia has indicated its willingness, in principle, to host a similar regional meeting in Africa in 1998;

26. Encourages all Member States, organizations within the United Nations system and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations with space activities, as well as space-related industries, to contribute actively to achieving the objectives of UNISPACE III and invites Member States to submit their national papers for UNISPACE III;

27. Agrees that in order to service UNISPACE III, to the extent feasible, within existing resources, the level of conference-servicing resources available to the Committee and its subsidiary bodies for the biennium 1998-1999 should remain at the same level as for the biennium 1996-1997;

28. Recommends that more attention be paid to all aspects related to the protection and the preservation of the outer space environment, especially those potentially affecting the Earth's environment;

29. Considers that it is essential that Member States pay more attention to the problem of collisions of space objects, including those with nuclear power sources, with space debris, and other aspects of space debris, calls for the continuation of national research on this question, for the development of improved technology for the monitoring of space debris and for the compilation and dissemination of data on space debris, considers that, to the extent possible, information thereon should be provided to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, and agrees that international cooperation is needed to expand appropriate and affordable strategies to minimize the impact of space debris on future space missions;

---

[14] See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/52/20), sect. II.E.

30. Urges all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes;

31. Emphasizes the need to increase the benefits of space technology and its applications and to contribute to an orderly growth of space activities favourable to sustained economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, particularly in the developing countries;

32. Requests the Committee to continue to consider, as a matter of priority, ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes, taking into account the views expressed at its fortieth session and at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-third session;

33. Also requests the Committee to continue to consider at its forty-first session its agenda item entitled "Spin-off benefits of space technology: review of current status";

34. Endorses the decision of the Committee to grant permanent observer status to the International Space University;

35. Requests the specialized agencies and other international organizations to continue and, where appropriate, enhance their cooperation with the Committee and to provide it with progress reports on their work relating to the peaceful uses of outer space;

36. Requests the Committee to continue its work, in accordance with the present resolution, to consider, as appropriate, new projects in outer space activities, and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, including its views on which subjects should be studied in the future.